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ABSTRACT

Teacher selection is a complex set of procedures that may be influenced by administrators' beliefs and values. This paper presents findings of a study that identified the teacher characteristics most valued by Arkansas public school administrators. Data were gathered during the 1995-96 school year through a survey of 40 area school administrators who were asked to rate teacher-evaluation criteria in the following five areas: teacher abilities, school management, personal qualities, professional and social traits, and verification of information. The survey elicited a 75 percent rate of return. Administrators most valued human relations with peers, attitude, dependability, appearance, and professional knowledge. The data showed a high level of agreement among administrators about the importance and accessibility of factors commonly associated with teacher selection. (LMI)

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A STUDY OF SELECTED TEACHER CHARACTERISTICS VALUED BY ARKANSAS PUBLIC SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to identify selected teacher characteristics that are valued by Arkansas public school administrators. Data for the study were obtained during the 1995-96 school year using a survey developed by the researchers. The survey was designed to examine the ratings of important teacher characteristics. The top five characteristics valued by Arkansas administrators are: human relations with peers, attitude, dependability, appearance, and professional knowledge. In examining perceptions, this study revealed a high level of agreement about the importance and accessability of factors commonly associated with teacher selection.

A Study of Selected Teacher Characteristics Valued by Arkansas Public School Administrators

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What biases do administrators possess? What characteristics and information do Arkansas administrators value when they make hiring decisions. Teacher selection is a complex set of procedures that includes information gathering, encoding, interpretation, retrieval, and integration of information; and decision-making.

Although literature in personnel administration and industrial psychology contains a good bit of information about employment practices in the private sector, research focusing on the behavior of school administrators in hiring practices is limited. Two points of information are helpful :

1. Studies that have been completed commonly are identified as either macro-analytical and micro-analytical. The former usually involved descriptive correlations techniques to assess predictor of job performance- most common the job interview. The latter entails experimental settings, the use of inferential statistics, and focus on a specific stage of the teacher employment- common method is comparing written materials for hypothetical teacher candidates.

2. Recently authors and researchers have explored teacher selection as a process rather than a discrete event. They have concentrated on procedural elements of the selection process rather than solely evaluating outcomes. They examine administrator behavior during paper screening and interviewing stages.

Central to research on the administrator behavior in teacher selection is the idea of biases and their effect on decisions. Dipboye (1992) developed a theoretical framework relevant to studying values, beliefs, and priorities of administrators. His approach tied to social cognition theory and defined knowledge structures as "beliefs" regarding the requirements of the job are characteristics of applicants. Recognizing the presence of biases and their impact, authors have attempted to develop integrated models for decision making in teacher selection. One of the most common techniques of studying administrator behavior involves rating applicant credentials. Hypothetical candidates who process nearly equal qualifications except for the variable(s) being studied are rated. A second approach has been to survey principals to establish which criteria they value. This is the approach that was used in this study.

Description of Study

The study evolved from a common interest shared by a superintendent and two professors about what principals and superintendents actually use when they hire teachers. More specifically the research addressed the following questions:
1. How do principal rate the importance of criteria commonly used in teacher selection?
2. Do demographic factor affect ratings of importance?
3. Which factors are ranked as the most important?

Data for the study were obtained during the 1995-96 school year using a survey developed by the researchers. The survey was designed to examine the ratings of importance by using rank order from 1--9 with 1 being the most important in the given area. The questionnaire composed of recommendations from public school personnel was mailed to forty area school administrators. The instrument asked for a ranking in the following five areas: teacher abilities, school management, personal qualities, professional and social traits, and verification of information. The instrument included forty six items with an option for administrators to add additional items. Thirty useable instruments were returned (75% return rate).

Findings

The top rating from each area included:
Teacher Abilities- motivating students
School Management- interest in students
Personal Qualities- attitude
Professional & Social Traits- understanding of students
Verification of Information- quality of Interview

When asked to pick the top five characteristics/events that administrators value when hiring, senior education students chose:

1. Human Relations with Peers
2. Attitude
3. Dependability
4. Appearance
5. Professional Knowledge

Discussion

In examining perceptions, administrators in this study revealed a high level of agreement about the importance and assessability of factors commonly associated with teacher selection. Ratings suggest that administrators see the vast majority of these criteria/characteristics as important.

TEACHER ABILITIES (11 items)

1	Motivating students
2	Reliability
3	Enthusiasm
4	Managing the classroom
5	Willingness to work
6	Developing a classroom climate
7	Willingness to adapt new ideas
8	Mental ability
9	Evaluating students
10	Experience
11	Initiative for extra-curricula activities

SCHOOL MANAGEMENT (9 items)

1 Interest in students

2 Human relation skills with students

3 Discipline

4 Human relation skills with peers

5 Planning for teaching

6 Organization & Structure

7 Human relation skills with administrators

8 Method of teaching

9 Attention to records

PERSONAL QUALITIES (10 items)

1 Attitude

2 Character

3 Emotional Stability

4 Initiative

5 Punctuality

6 Health

7 Conviction

8 Tact

9 Reputation

9 General Appearance

PROFESSIONAL AND SOCIAL TRAITS (11 items)

1 Understanding of children

2 Cooperation and Loyalty

3 Proper English Usage

4 Teaching philosophy

5 Professional interest

6 Special abilities

7 Interest in school activities

8 Student teaching experience

9 Community Involvement

10 Activities and interests

11 Special awards and grants

VERIFICATION OF INFORMATION (5 items)

1 Quality of interview

2 Certification

3 Reference

4 Academic achievement in college

5 NTE Scores

REFERENCES

Dipboye, R. L. (1992). Selection Interviews: Process Perspectives. Cincinnati, OH: South-Western Publishing.